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## Protecting the Refuge

Zhang Zheng-gao, a 46-year-old Chinese engineer, jumped from an upper floor of Peking's mission in New York last April, winning asylum at the cost of a broken ankle. With help from local Chinese businessmen, he settled in an apartment in Brooklyn and bought a 19-inch color TV set and a cassette player. But in mid-July, Mr. Zhang vanished.

Within several days, he was reported back in Peking, where the government stated he had returned voluntarily. The State Department accepts this claim, noting that he seems to be back at his old job, but other investigators believe Mr. Zhang was kidnapped as a warning to Chinese athletes then arriving at the Los Angeles Olympics.

The case of Zhang Zheng-gao, for all its ambiguity, makes us think seriously about several other mysteries. Two weeks ago another Chinese engineer named Zhang Xin (no apparent relation) tried to seek asylum while his government mission changed planes at Kennedy Airport. After a day in New York, he somehow wound up at the Chinese consulate in midtown and was found on its roof hanged the next morning. The New York Medical Examiner has issued a preliminary finding of suicide.

A similar mystery involves Peking's capitalist rival, the Republic of China on Taiwan. A Chinese-American writer named Henry Liu, 52, was murdered at his Daly City home south of San Francisco on Oct. 15. Police have named three Chinese suspects, said to be members of the Bamboo Gang, a large Taiwan-based underworld

group. Two were arrested in Taiwan and are said to have confessed, but Daly City police complain Taiwan hasn't been giving the information needed for indictments. Friends of Mr. Liu accuse higher-ups in Taiwan of arranging the killing to silence his embarrassing writings about the regime.

None of these cases is subject to the kind of proof that would stand up in court, which is part of the problem with incidents of this genre. Yet there can be little doubt that foreign governments sometimes do dirty tricks on U.S. soil. Similarly suspicious incidents have implicated the Philippines, the Soviet Union and Cuba, among others. And it is not always clear that U.S. authorities are doing everything they can to discourage such activity. There is a predisposition to give such episodes low priority, particularly if diplomatic repercussions might result from a tough stand.

Yet such escapades are an affront to both public order and the U.S. reputation as a haven of freedom; they ought to be taken seriously, especially by an administration that professes devotion to law and order. We especially need to learn whether agents capable of the suspected deed still are operating in the U.S. The place to start is with a strong effort to unravel the disappearance of Zhang Zheng-gao, the suicide of Zhang Xin and the murder of Mr. Liu. Without prejudging any of the cases, serious investigations would give would-be foreign intimidators the message that the U.S. really is a refuge for the ideals of freedom.